

earn the same that her male counterpart did.

Let's think about that for just a second. A woman must work a full year plus an additional 6 months and 28 days just to make what her male coworkers made in 1 year. That is 208 days more than a man must work for the exact same salary.

The average African-American woman working full time year-round will make 64 cents for every dollar that her White male counterpart makes. It is unconscionable that in the 21st century we have not resolved this income disparity.

For millions of African-American women struggling to make ends meet to put food on the table, the wage gap puts the American dream out of reach. To give these women a fair shot—an equal shot—at prosperity, Congress must take action.

We have to ensure that all women, African American and otherwise, are empowered to ensure that they are receiving equal pay for equal work. But that is not all. We should raise the minimum wage.

I could do a quiz in this room, and I think everyone would miss it by quite a long mark, of how many Black women are earning minimum wage, what percentage of Black women are earning minimum wage in this country. Of 100 percent of people earning the minimum wage, what percentage is Black women? Almost 25 percent. Black women are almost 25 percent of everyone drawing the minimum wage. To be exact, it is a little over 23 percent.

An increase in the Federal minimum wage would mean more money for their families. It would be maybe to buy groceries or for an extra pair of shoes for their children—or a pair of shoes for their children—or maybe to help with their education in some way, and importantly, for more time to spend at home.

No woman should make less money than a man doing the same exact work. African-American women deserve better. So do my daughters and my granddaughters. That is why I remain committed to ensuring that American women receive equal pay for equal work.

I encourage all Republicans, especially the leader, to take up Senator MURRAY's Paycheck Fairness Act, which would help close the wage disparity for African-American women.

That may be a tall order to expect from today's Senate Republicans. After all, five times in 5 years, Republicans have blocked equal pay for women. How? By filibustering. Five times in 5 years Republicans have told their very own sisters, daughters, and wives that they are not interested in fixing this income disparity. It is unfair. I can't understand it.

Who here can explain the concept of pay inequality to their daughter or granddaughter without shuddering? How do you tell a little girl—a little

girl with big dreams—that in America today her life's work will not be compensated like a man's. It is not right. It is not fair.

Today, as we recognize Black Women's Equal Pay Day, I hope my Republican colleagues will finally understand that it is unfair to continue the way we are, and we should finally come to our senses. I hope that the Republican leader will make the necessary moves to allow us to address this injustice that hurts millions of American families. Twenty-three percent of people drawing the minimum wage are African-American women. All women deserve equal pay for equal work.

Would the Chair be good enough to tell the Senate what the business of the day is.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 22, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 22) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of determining the employers to which the employer mandate applies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

McConnell modified amendment No. 2266, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell amendment No. 2421 (to amendment No. 2266), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell (for Inhofe) amendment No. 2533 (to amendment No. 2421), relating to Federal-aid highways and highway safety construction programs.

McConnell amendment No. 2417 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2266), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2418 (to amendment No. 2417), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the business before the Senate is the construction of highways and bridges and the operation of mass transit and buses across America. How important is that to our economy? I know in my home State it is critically important, but I think it is important across the Nation.

Our infrastructure, our roads, and bridges are critical for business to operate profitably and for people to have good-paying jobs. We all know the tragedies that occur when bridges collapse or are closed, and we know that thousands across this country need repair.

When it comes to mass transit, come on down to the Loop in Chicago in the morning and stand with me and watch the folks streaming out of the train

stations and off the CTA and off the buses, headed to work every day. It is essential to the economy of Chicago and Illinois, the State I represent.

The fact is that on Friday the authorization to build these highways and bridges and maintain mass transit and buses expires. It is the 33rd short-term extension of the highway trust fund—the 33rd. There was a time when we would pass with regularity and predictability a 5- or 6-year highway bill on a bipartisan basis, and we are anxious to do it.

There was a time when Members of the House and Senate knew the needs back home and knew that the Federal Government played a critical role in filling those needs, and so they voted for the highway trust fund reauthorization.

In my State of Illinois, 80 percent of the highway construction is paid for by the Federal Government. When the Federal Government stops paying, folks stop working. You have seen it; haven't you—the potholes, the highways that aren't finished? You wonder why in the heck did they put all those blockades up and slow down the traffic and nobody is working.

The problem has to do with the way we are currently funding our highway program. We are doing it in bits and pieces. My colleague and friend from California, Senator BOXER, draws a pretty interesting analogy. She said that if you were setting out to buy a home and went to the bank, and the bank said that, of course, we will offer you a mortgage, and here is a 60-day mortgage to buy your home, you would say: Wait a minute; I am not going to make an investment such as buying a home if I can only get a loan for 60 days. That is what has happened to the highway trust fund. The expiration of this temporary authorization on Friday is the end of a 60-day mortgage which we have offered to America to build highways.

Well, several Members of the Senate decided to do something unique—not totally unique but unusual, let's say—to try to find a bipartisan compromise that can move this country forward, try to break through some of the rhetoric and debate on the highway trust fund and find something that works.

I wish to especially salute Senator BARBARA BOXER of California for leading this effort on the Democratic side and joining with Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, the Republican majority leader, and Senator INHOFE from Oklahoma, who is the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

This is indeed an odd couple, BARBARA BOXER and MITCH MCCONNELL, but they have come up with a plan—a compromise—to solve a problem.

When I go home to Illinois, what I hear over and over from the people I represent is, Senator, when are you folks in Washington going to stop squabbling? When are you going to stop fighting? Can you basically sit down and reach an agreement to solve a